CLAIMS

Having thus described our invention, what we claim as new and desire to secure by Letters Patent is as follows:

1. A method of purchasing products and services over a network comprising the steps of:

submitting a Request for Quotation (RFQ) with at least one attribute over the network;

receiving at least one bid in response to the RFQ over the network, each of the at least one bid having at least one attribute value associated therewith; and

creating a graphical visual interface based on a Cartesian coordinate system, the graphical user interface showing a relationship in a graphical format between the at least one attribute and the at least one bid and associated attribute value in a single display.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

providing a form for entering the RFQ and at least one attribute; and

providing a form for entering the least one bid and attribute value.

3. The method of claim 2, further comprising the step of submitting the RFQ form and the bid form over the network to a web server.

4. The method of claim 3, wherein the RFQ form and the bid form are web pages which allow a buyer and a seller to input one or more data values for one or more data categories.

1   5. The method of claim 4, wherein the data categories include the at least one

2   attribute, the at least one attribute value or a business condition submitted with the at

3   least one RFQ.

1   6. The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one attribute value is one of price,

2   quantity, volume discount policy, material quality, product quality ratings, merchant

3   reputation, warranty, support, tax, delivery time, and delivery cost.

1   7. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of storing the RFQ and the at

2   least one RFQ attribute and the at least one bid and attribute value in a database.

1   8. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of providing business

2   conditions with the RFQ, the business conditions being one or more constraints for

3   values associated with the at least one attribute.

1   9. The method of claim 8, wherein the business conditions further include one or

2   more relationships among the at least one attribute value and the at least one RFQ

3   attribute.

1   10. The method of claim 8, further comprising the steps of:

2   providing at least one bid line representative of connected attribute values

3   displayed on the graphical visual interface and responsive to the business conditions;

4   filtering the business conditions in order to eliminate one of the at least one bid

5   line which does not meet one or more of the business conditions.

1   11. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of providing at least two

2   attribute lines and one bid line, wherein:

3   each of the attribute lines represents respectively one of the at least one

4   attribute, the attribute lines are parallel and equally-spaced; and

5   the one bid line represents connected attribute values positioned on the each of

6   the attribute lines and associated with a bid of the at least one bid.

1   12. The method of claim 11, further comprising the step of filtering out an attribute

2   line of the attribute lines or the one bid line from the graphical visual interface.

1   13. The method of claim 11, further comprising the step of filtering out a portion of

2   the one bid line from the graphical visual interface.

1   14. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of filtering out an attribute

2   value of the least one attribute value from the graphical visual interface.

1   15. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of filtering out dominated bids

2   associated with the at least one bid from the graphical visual interface.

1   16. The method of claim 15, wherein the dominated bids have one or more attributes

2   each having a value not exceeding a value of a corresponding attribute of another bid.

1   17. The method of claim 1, further comprising an attribute line reordering operation

2   and an attribute value range adjust operation associated with the at least one RFQ

3   attribute and the attribute value.

1   18. The method of claim 17, wherein the attribute line reordering operation changes

2   an order of attribute lines associated with the at least one attribute.

1   19. The method of claim 18, wherein the attribute value range adjust operation

2   changes a range of attribute values associated with the at least one attribute value.

1   20. A system for purchasing products and services over a network comprising:

2   means for submitting a Request for Quotation (RFQ) with at least one attribute

3   over the network;

4   means for receiving at least one bid in response to the RFQ over the network,

5   each of the at least one bid having at least one attribute value; and

6   means for creating a graphical visual interface based on a Cartesian coordinate

7   system showing a relationship in a graphical format between the at least one attribute

8   and corresponding attribute value in a single display.

1   21. The system of claim 20, further comprising means for filtering from the graphical

2   visual interface one of the at least one attribute value and the RFQ value.

1   22. The system of claim 20, further comprising:

2   means for providing at least one bid line representative of connected attribute

3   values displayed on the graphical visual interface;

4   means for filtering at least one of the bid line or a portion thereof.

1   23. The system of claim 22, further comprising means for providing attribute lines

2   representative of the at least one RFQ attribute.

1   24. The system of claim 23, further comprising:

2   means for placing attribute values associated with the submitted bid on

3   respective attribute lines; and

4   means for providing a bid line spanning between the attribute lines, the bid line

5   connecting the attribute values located on the respective attribute lines.

1   25. The system of claim 24, further comprising:

2   means for reordering the attribute lines; and

3   means for adjusting an attribute value range associated with the at least one

4   attribute.

1   26. A machine readable medium containing code for purchasing products and services

2   over a network, the code implementing the steps of:

3   submitting a Request for Quotation (RFQ) with at least one attribute over the

4   network;

5   receiving at least one bid in response to the RFQ over the network, each of the

6   at least one bid having at least one attribute value; and

7   creating a graphical visual interface based on a Cartesian coordinate system,

8   the graphical user interface showing a relationship in a graphical format between the at

9   least one attribute and the at least one bid and associated attribute value in a single

10   display.

1   27. The machine readable code of claim 26, further comprising the step of filtering

2   from the graphical visual interface one of the at least attribute value and the RFQ

3   attribute.

1   28. The machine readable code of claim 26, further comprising the step of providing

2   at least one bid line representative of connected attribute values of the at least one

3   attribute value.

1   29. The machine readable code of claim 26, further comprising the step of providing

2   attribute lines representative of the at least one RFQ attribute.

1   30 The machine readable code of claim 29, further comprising the steps of:

2   placing attribute values associated with the submitted bid on respective attribute lines;

3   and

4   providing a bid line spanning between the attribute lines, the bid line

5   connecting the attribute values located on the respective attribute lines.

1   31. The machine readable code of claim 30, further comprising the steps of :

2   reordering the attribute lines; and

3   adjusting an attribute value range associated with the at least one attribute

4   value.